



# Browncroft Crier

NEWSLETTER OF THE BROWNCROFT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

SINCE 1973 - Volume #164

P.O. Box 10127, Rochester, New York 14610  
<http://browncroftna.org>

October 2010

## BNA Executive Committee

### Officers:

President

Bob Genthner

Vice-President

Cassy Petsos

Secretary

Jayne Hurwitz

Treasurer

Jim VanMeenen

## District Reps

Elm

Chris Gaudieri

Corwin

Holly Petsos

Croydon

Ann Chew

## BNA Voicemail:

234-0160

## Inside This Issue

President's Message

Membership Drive

Crime Updates

Bit of History

School 46 Garden

BNA Garage Sale

## Fall Neighborhood Meeting Monday, October 25th

7:00 PM – 8:30 PM  
Winton Branch Library

7:00 Welcome and Refreshments

7:10 **Launch of the "On Your Way with BNA"** transportation service for Browncroft residents.

Speaker: Sister Ann, Lifespan Program Coordinator

BNA's Browncroft – Home For A lifetime committee is partnering with Lifespan's "Give A Lift", a consortium of volunteer driving programs to create a program that provides rides to our Browncroft neighbors who do not drive or who are temporarily unable to drive. With the help of Browncroft volunteers we will be able to transport those needing rides for medical appointments and necessary errands. See article on page 3.

### 7:45 **All things Browncroft – Open Forum**

- Leader: Bob Genthner, BNA President  
Topics: zoning, neighborhood street signage, public safety, speeding, School #46, beautification

8:20 Wrap up and Refreshments

## Browncroft and Vicinity History Display Day Saturday, October 23rd

10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Winton Branch Library Meeting Room

October is Neighborhood History Month and BNA will celebrate with an OPEN HOUSE of our History Committee's collections. Committee members will present display tables of historic maps, charts, brochures, notes, pictures, and items from our rich past. You can at your leisure browse the material, sit down and read some of the booklets, or leave an oral/written history for others. Selected digitized slides from our History Show, "Browncroft: A Beautiful Section of a Beautiful City" will be presented.

(and featuring the)

### **Browncroft Walking Tour**

1:30 PM to 2:30 PM

Starting at the Winton Branch Library

The tour will explore historic architecture and landscape with tour guide Cassy Petsos. The neighborhood homes include original farm houses, early 20th century residential homes, and many varieties of trees.

## ***From the President.....***

***Bob Genthner***

As we kick off our 38th Annual Membership Drive which spans BNA's June 1, 2010 - May 31, 2011 fiscal year, let us remember that the "neighborhood that works together, plays together, stays together!". Your \$5 donation and returned membership form is a strong sign of support to the 17 Street Representatives, 4 Officers, and 8 Committee Chairs who serve on the BNA Board of Directors and the 672 households of the Browncroft neighborhood. It also is a valuable indicator to elected officials of your commitment to the goals and objectives of the Browncroft Neighborhood Association. Please support BNA so that we can be a full 672 households strong!

The Board of Directors is the governing body and sets the policies of BNA. Each of our 17 streets is entitled by the BNA Constitution to a designated street representative on the Board. If the designated representative is unable to attend, the Board will recognize a Board approved alternate street representative from that street in attendance. There is no limit to the number of (Board named) alternates from a street - but only one vote is recorded per street.

I would like to welcome our newest designated street representative Linda Siple from Ramsey Park as a director. This will leave four BNA streets, Quentin, Corwin, Merchants and Gas Light, with no designated representative (i.e. director) identified at this time serving on the BNA Board. If interested to fill one of these positions, please give me a call or send an email.

For the 3rd year, BNA was one of the financial supporters of the North Winton Village's Festival of the Arts, held on Sept. 25th. The Board approved sponsorship at the \$250 Silver level.

As a final note, I was very pleased to cook 98 Hot Dogs at our Family Picnic in July. Even with threatening

## **MEMBERSHIP DRIVE 2010-11 RENEW OR JOIN NOW!**

Fall is here so it is time for our annual BNA membership drive; our 38th!

Please fill out and mail the household membership application envelope provided with this CRIER newsletter. (However, if you prefer to save a stamp, you may drop the envelope off at 195 Newcastle Road.) The household membership level entitles everyone in the residence to be a voting member of BNA and also entitles them to any member benefits offered during the year. BNA would like to have on record your email address, same as we do your phone number. There is a space provided for your email address with the additional option to sign up for our BNA-Announce emailing list. A great way to stay connected with BNA between newsletters and meetings; over 270 are presently subscribed.

Annual dues are \$5 per household and go dStreetlight Supplement Browncroft Crier October 2010 Attention property owners of Newcastle Road, Corwin Road, Windemere Road, Dorchester Road, Gramercy Park, Ramsey Park, Croydon Road, Yarmouth Road, Beresford Rd, and Quentin

weather at 5:00 that cleared into a fair sky for the evening, it was a great turn out of approximately 70 neighbors, and many of the 27 households represented stayed late into the evening.



El Presidente performing duties at picnic

Rd. . Please read the following carefully as your signature is required. The neighborhood (again) must come to a majority agreement by signature of property owners before the City of Rochester will undertake to construct a period, concrete pole streetlight system to replicate the original streetlights for our neighborhood. "New Street Lights? We Want The Best." That was the headline in a 1984 Browncroft Crier newsletter. You may well recall this cry to preserve the period streetlights in the neighborhood, if you were a resident in 1984 to 1987 of the Browncroft subdivision streets

## **Welcome to all of our new neighbors!**

Our newsletter, the Browncroft CRIER, delivered to your door approximately six times a year by one of our 32 volunteer carriers, keeps you informed of the activities of our committees and the happenings in the neighborhood. It will also tell you about upcoming meetings, events and issues we must all address together.

Our website at [www.browncroftna.org](http://www.browncroftna.org) is a great place to start and contains a calendar of events, meeting announcements, CRIER newsletters, RPD Crime Reports, Member posted classified ads, contact points, forums, neighbor recommended service providers, and an early history of the Browncroft community and much more. Our email address is: [info@browncroftna.org](mailto:info@browncroftna.org) for any questions or comments.

## "ON YOUR WAY" DRIVER PROGRAM

The October 25th BNA General Meeting will be explaining the volunteer driver program that your OYW committee has been working hard to make a reality.

Volunteer drivers have been recruited to take residents of the Browncroft Neighborhood Association area to medical appointments. To be eligible, the resident must be able to walk to the volunteer's car with, or without assistance. People requiring a wheel chair cannot be accommodated.

**Starting October 26th** the telephone number to call for a ride is **733-4386** and can be made Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The service is free. Rides should be scheduled one week in advance for destinations only within Monroe County for appointments scheduled between 9-4 weekdays, if possible.

Drivers must complete an application, have a background check, and be trained by Lifespan's Give a Lift Program before driving for "On Your Way".

For more information go to the BNA meeting; or request a complete list of requirements for passengers and volunteers by calling **733-4386** after October 25th, and one will be sent out to you. Also, check the BNA website.

## #46 School Garden Update



School 46 Sculpture Garden Project has gotten off the ground this school year. Mums have been planted along the North side of the School near the entrance. Over 500 Daffodil bulbs are being planted on October 2nd by students and parents. Some small model sculptures have been designed by students and completed. They will be made in the future into large scale creations for display.

Anyone interested in helping to make this project a reality by donating time and/or money can contact art teacher, Philip Lange, at Philip.lange@gmail.com or 288-8008 Ext. 2110.

## 4th Browncroft Street Marker Recovered

by Bob Genthner

In the mid 1980's, an original historic Browncroft street marker was discovered near SUNY Brockport in front of a rental property on Adams Street by one of our neighbors. It was being used as a house marker in a small garden in front of the residence. Since that time the owner had preferred to keep the marker in place and the garden

had disappeared as well as the address hanging on the marker, but he had kept the marker in excellent condition.

This year the owner was contacted again by BNA and this time he agreed to return the marker to Browncroft. On June 28th this year, BNA recovered the marker and is now storing it for installation later this year at the corner of Dorchester and Gramercy Park.

BNA thanks Mr. Bhim Madan of Brockport for donating back to Browncroft the last of four known historic markers in existence.

## Rochester Police Weekly Crime Reports

Since the end of April 2009, as part of the monthly PCIC (Police Community Interactive Committee) open meeting with the RPD, BNA receives Rochester Police Department (RPD) crime reports for the PSA 29 area which includes the streets in BNA. The report is posted to our BNA Web Site at [www.browncroftna.org/CrimeReports](http://www.browncroftna.org/CrimeReports).

This is a report that has been designed by the Monroe Crime Analysis Center for our reference. They distribute this report by e-mail on each Wednesday of the month. If you have any questions about this report, please feel free to call your crime prevention officer at the South East Quadrant Neighborhood Service Center 428-7640.

The PCIC meets on the 2nd Wednesday each month at 7:00 PM at the Thomas P. Ryan Community Center on Webster Avenue.

Bob Genthner

## *A Little Bit of History ...*

Holiday lights in Browncroft – started 90 years ago.

In 1920, ninety years ago this year, Charles J. Brown originated the idea of lighting the foliage and trees in Browncroft. He put his idea into effect and it became a permanent tradition for the next 10 years or so. Traffic police were on hand to control the thousands of vehicles visiting the neighborhood for their passengers to see the myriad of colored lights that were strung through the trees and shrubs of the Browncroft neighborhood. The lights were turned on for display from December 24th through December 31st inclusive. The following appeared in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle on December 24, 1928:

**"CHRISTMAS STREET DECORATIONS WILL ATTRACT THOUSANDS TONIGHT**

continued on page 4





# History

continued from page 3

*Browncroft, Seneca Parkway, and Lake Avenue Sections and Many Other Communities Will Be Gay with Holiday Ornaments and Colored Lights*

*Browncroft, Rochester's holiday fairyland where thousands and thousands of electric bulbs glitter in impressive decorations of homes and lawns, will again attract thousands of automobiles tonight, when the annual display is turned on for Christmas Eve.*

*The elaborate illumination of homes in this residential section has long been one of the holiday features in Rochester and each year is viewed by thousands of visitors. Browncroft is generally credited with being the first residential community to sponsor this now widespread practice of holiday decoration and has always maintained its position in the fore-*

*front of Rochester sections donning special garb for the holiday period.*

REMEMBERING: It's now 2010 and times have changed but will Browncroftonians remember with a one time celebration of the 1920 lighting tradition with each household turning on at least one holiday light?

Bob Genthner

## BNA's 2011 Winter Gathering

Our 33rd Annual WINTER GATHERING is scheduled for Friday, January 21, 2011 at Glendoveer's, 2328 Old Browncroft Blvd. Mark your calendar now! Look on the web site and in the January 2011 CRIER newsletter issue for details for this fun time for our Browncroft neighbors to relax and gather for chat, food, and drink.

## WINTON BRANCH LIBRARY CORNER

### October Events

**Book discussion In the Neighborhood: Wednesday, October 6, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.** - The Search for Community on an American Street One Sleepover at a Time by Peter Lovenheim (please note author book signing and talk on October 14th).

**Author Visit and Book Signing - Peter Iovenheim Thursday, October 14, 7:00 p.m.** Copies of the book will be on sale at the library.

**Baby Signing Time** . A certified Baby Signing Time instructor will use music, books, and playful activities to teach sign language to babies and their caregivers. Thursdays Oct. 14th, 21st, and 28th -10:00-10:30 am. Newborns - 24 months. Register in person or by phone 428-8204

**Tail Waggin' Tutors** Book-loving dogs are coming to listen to you read a story. Bring your own book or read one of ours. **Saturday, Oct. 16th -11:00-12:00** Ages 4-12. Registration required, call 428-8204.

**Fall Storytimes** - Join US for stories, rhymes, and activities designed for toddlers & preschoolers! **Mondays,**

**Tuesdays, and Wednesdays**  
**October 18th - December 8th** Registration suggested  
- For more information call 428-8204



**Teen Movie Night- Halloween Horror**  
**All through the month of October**, Teens can vote for their favorite horror movie. The winning movie will be shown in our meeting room and popcorn will be provided! Call for more information 428-4204 Thursday Oct. 28th - 6:00-7:30pm  
**Halloween Craft Party** Join us for spooky stories, snacks, and crafts. Wear your costume! Saturday, October 30th - 1:00 - 1:45 pm Ages 3-12. Registration suggested.

*This library is handicapped accessible. To request specific accommodations, contact Deborah Nevin at 428-8304 ten days prior to the program.*

Sully Library at the Mayor Ryan Community Center, 530 Webster Avenue, is now open Monday-Friday 9am-9pm, Sat 12-5, and Sunday 12-5. 428-8208 This is the only city branch library open on Sunday. Sully Library is close and is an option for someone who needs Internet, books, or media during hours that Winton Branch is not open.

## BNA Garage 2011 Sale

It's not too early to start thinking about the 2011 Biennial BNA Area wide Garage Sale scheduled for the weekend of Saturday April 30th and Sunday May 1st, 2011. This event has occurred in each odd year since 1981 and is eagerly anticipated near and far. Registration will start in April. See the web site garage sale tab and the April 2011 CRIER Newsletter for details.

## City of Rochester Fall Leaf Pick-up Schedule

According to the service bureau leaves raked to the tree lawn between the sidewalk and curb will be picked up the 3rd week in November starting Monday, November 15th.



## Fall Clean-up In the Browncroft Rose Garden

Volunteers are needed Saturday, October 30th at 9:30 a.m. to work in the flower beds raking, pruning and weeding before winter winds and snow are upon us.

Volunteers, please bring your own pruners and/or loppers. Refreshments are planned at the Petsos' house after wards.



**Attention property owners** of Newcastle Road, Corwin Road, Windemere Road, Dorchester Road, Gramercy Park, Ramsey Park, Croydon Road, Yarmouth Road, Beresford Rd, and Quentin Rd.

**Please read the following carefully as your signature is required.** The neighborhood (again) must come to a majority agreement by signature of property owners, before the City of Rochester will undertake to construct a period, concrete pole streetlight system to replicate the original streetlights for our neighborhood.

**“New Street Lights? We Want The Best.”** That was the headline in a 1984 Browncroft Crier newsletter. You may well recall this cry to preserve the period streetlights in the neighborhood, if you were a resident in 1984 to 1987 of the Browncroft subdivision streets south of Browncroft Blvd., as well as Quentin Road. Since that time, the Crier has published streetlight issue updates with less and less frequency. There have been two new mayors and commissioners and city engineers, but little movement to refurbish the crumbling concrete poles with various style post top lamps (harps or globes), or to remove and replace with concrete poles the tall, metal arch-over lights.

**Why were streetlights an issue in 1984, and why are they an issue now?** Prior to 1984 all streetlights were owned and operated by RG&E. In 1984 the city undertook a massive capital improvement program to takeover all residential streetlight circuits in the City and replace them with their own streetlights. This “street-light modernization program” was projected to save the city money as the city would no longer be paying RG&E to operate the old 5000 volt system, with concrete poles and incandescent lights. The city would buyout the expected life of the RG&E systems and install fiberglass poles with “colonial” style post tops that held high pressure sodium lights (“lamps”).

Browncroft rebelled along with the Cobbs Hill (Nunda Blvd., Beckwith Terrace, SanGabriel Drive), Rundell Park and Arnold Park neighborhoods. Residents of these areas appreciated the value the concrete poles with period post-top luminaires carried for their late nineteenth and early twenty-first century neighborhoods. Rundell Park and Arnold Park were already designated landmarks. Historic preservation sentiments, inspired by the City’s sesquicentennial celebration that same year, were strong in Browncroft and Cobbs Hill, as they are today. That is why southern Newcastle Road, Croydon Rd, Yarmouth Road, and Beresford Road still have their charming old streetlights; and why Corwin, Windemere, Dorchester Roads, Garmercy and Ramsey Parks still have the tall metal “davit” poles from a 1950’s modernization project. However, before we were allowed to not have the city’s new “generic” system, we were mandated to agree to pay a special assessment to cover the higher capital and energy costs of a concrete pole, incandescent light system. Over Eighty Five percent (85%) of Browncroft Residents agreed to the special assessment.

The city, however, never undertook fabricating a new replica system, which is why there is no special assessment shown as levied on the tax bills after the streetlight category. This was just fine to the homeowners of streets that merely wanted to keep what they had – the charming concrete pole system with twinkling harp lamps or globes. But Browncroft residents on the streets from Dorchester north to Browncroft, which were included by necessity in the option to have a replica concrete pole system because they were on the same circuit, have been waiting impatiently for period residential streetlights to replace the davits, as the city promised.

**What was wrong with black fiberglass poles, colonial post tops, and high pressure sodium lights?**

Overall the appearance was not consistent architecturally with the homes in the neighborhoods. The massing of the column-like design of the concrete pole fits our large older homes. The concrete streetlights were designed and installed concurrent with the development of Browncroft. In fact, in 1912 Charles J. Brown was on the Municipal Arts Commission, along with other prominent Rochesterians such as George Eastman, that chose the fluted concrete pole as the best design for the growing areas of the city. Specifically, the fiberglass poles were considered thin in appearance and materials, to sway in the wind, shatter easily, and to be subject to vandalism. They required periodic painting as fiberglass breaks down from ultraviolet light exposure. The pseudo colonial post tops were considered uninteresting and more befitting of suburban tract housing. There was much objection to the high pressure sodium (HPS) light because of the sickly orange cast to the light that everyone associated with commercial zones and high crime areas. The color rendition, as compared to natural light, is so poor that greenery in the landscape appears brown and in winter the beauty of the white snow covering at night is lost to the orange glow.

**Why can’t we just keep what we have?** Even if the existing system was not crumbling and using antiquat-

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ed wiring, the city (or RG&E) would be forced to upgrade to energy efficient high-arc lighting because of new federal laws that will take effect by 2014 at which time incandescent bulbs will no longer be available on the market. Fortunately, there is new light technology since 1984 so that a warm white, energy efficient light bulb is an option. However, they will not fit into the existing harp fixtures. Some redesign of that option would be necessary if chosen. This petition does not address which historic period style will go in, at this time.

**What does the neighborhood association recommend for Browncroft?** BNA hopes that all property owners will opt to preserve the historic charm of the neighborhood by agreeing to the special assessment. The streets affected by this decision have become listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the intervening years; and an important part of the historic significance of the neighborhood is the streetscape with its designed landscape consisting of large shade trees, beautiful magnolia and other flowering shrubs and period furnishings, such as the Browncroft markers and the period streetlights, many still draped with wisteria planted by Brown Brothers Nursery. All of the elements of our neighborhood that contributed to the historic designation also contribute to its charm and real estate value, and consequently, its stability.

**How was the proposed special assessment calculated?** This time around there is no energy cost differential to consider, as we cannot use an incandescent light. Therefore, it is the increased cost of a concrete pole and period post top luminaire as compared to the city's fiberglass pole and luminaire, multiplied by the number of fixtures, divided by the 15 year capital improvement bond repayment, divided by the linear footage of the streets on the circuit. The city has calculated that to be \$0.84. We will make their current cost estimate available to all.

**Is the assessment amount fair and accurate; and is the Streetlight Committee finished negotiating it?** Not necessarily. The city has not finished researching available components and their costs. They have used upper end figures, we feel, because they don't really know the specific costs. Today, as in the 1980's, the streetlight committee will thoroughly review the final cost estimates, and negotiate questionable items, as well as issues of fairness relative to other areas of the city and the value to be placed on providing appropriate infrastructure when planning and implementing capital improvements for the diverse neighborhoods that make up the city base.

**What must each homeowner do?** Enclosed with this supplement is an agreement that carries the wording drawn up by the City of Rochester's Corporation Counsel for the petition that must be signed by 60% of the property owners. If you are in favor of having a concrete pole and antique style luminaire streetlight system on your street, and are willing to accept a special assessment of approximately \$0.84 per linear foot of property frontage, please execute the agreement, fold and mail it to BNA via the post office box. (Enclose it in your membership envelope and save postage.) This individually signed document will be attached to the petition. If BNA does not receive it back, each property owner who has not returned it will be contacted in person.



old "harp" style luminaire with incandescent bulb. No longer available.

globe luminaire still available



retrofitted harp with metal halide lamp



city generic luminaire with high pressure sodium or QL



1950's davit with incandescent light

# **Browncroft Neighborhood Petition for Special Assessment**

The undersigned property owners with property fronting Browncroft Neighborhood request the creation by the City of Rochester of a special assessment district for that area. The purpose of the district will be for additional capital expenses associated with the installation of historic lighting in the Browncroft Neighborhood.

We understand that the City will impose an annual assessment against each property in the district to pay for the increased capital costs. This special assessment will be calculated and billed in annual installments based on actual capital costs of the non-standard lighting. Each year's assessment will be included on the property's tax bill. The assessment rate is estimated to be \$0.84 per linear foot of each property's frontage in the Browncroft Neighborhood for Year 1, and will vary depending on actual expenses in subsequent years.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Property Owner's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Owner's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Property Address



Browncroft Neighborhood Association  
Streetlight Committee  
P.O. Box 10127  
Rochester, NY 14610